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14 December 2009

RUS103315.E

Russia: Whether a database containing residency registration information of Russian citizens exists; how it is accessed and under what circumstances; how it is updated

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Sources report that a central database of residency registration information exists in Russia (Russia 10 Nov. 2009; CAC 17 Nov. 2009; Canada 24 Nov. 2009). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 10 November 2009, the Head of the Political Section of the Russian Embassy in Ottawa stated that the Ministry of Interior controls the database. He stated that law enforcement agencies have access to the residence registration information, but that they must request the information officially (Russia 10 Nov. 2009). In correspondence with the Research Directorate on 17 November 2009 and 19 November 2009, the Chair of the Civic Assistance Committee (CAC), a Moscow-based non-governmental organization (NGO), which provides assistance to migrants and refugees in Russia, stated that the Federal Migration Service is responsible for residence registration information and that the database is accessed by interior bodies of the government (CAC 17 Nov. 2009; *ibid.* 19 Nov. 2009). In 24 November 2009 correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow similarly stated that the Federal Migration Service maintains the database and that it is for the internal use of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subdivisions. According to the Chair of the CAC, the passport service of the Ministry of Interior previously administered registration (19 Nov. 2009). She also noted that the CAC is often able to receive answers to enquiries for registration information by submitting a request on letterhead to the government body responsible for registration (CAC 17 Nov. 2009; *ibid.* 19 Nov. 2009).

The Head of the Political Section of the Russian Embassy in Ottawa stated that the passport service section of the police updates the information in the database (Russia 10 Nov. 2009). The Chair of the CAC expressed doubts that the database is updated thoroughly, particularly in small villages and towns where it is sometimes difficult or impossible to access residency registration information (CAC 17 Nov. 2009; *ibid.* 19 Nov. 2009).

In 24 November 2009 correspondence with the Research Directorate, an Assistant Professor of Criminology at the University of Toronto, who has extensively researched regional migration policies in post-Soviet Russia, indicated that although city or regional databases of registration information are typically accessed only by police and other officials, the confidentiality of the databases "might be a legitimate concern because of the pervasive insecurity of all personal data in Russia, which in turn is linked to widespread corruption in the police and other public agencies". He suggested that unauthorized persons might be able to gain access to registration information through official connections, the payment of bribes, or other illicit means (Assistant Professor 24 Nov. 2009). Although this information could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate, several sources report on pervasive corruption among police and government officials in Russia (RFE/RL 28 Nov. 2009; US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 1, Sec. 3; Freedom House 2009; TI 2009).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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United States (US). 25 February 2009. Department of State. "Russia." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eur/119101.htm>> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2009]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to reach representatives at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Centre for Ethnopolitical and Regional Studies, were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response. A representative of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International (AI), European Country of Origin Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, Memorial, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

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